NOBODY'S FOOL: A STUDY OF THE YRODIVY IN *BORIS GODUNOV*

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Modest Musorgsky completed two versions of his opera *Boris Godunov* between 1869 and 1874, with significant changes in the second version. The second version adds a concluding lament by the fool character that serves as a warning to the people of Russia beyond the scope of the opera. The use of a fool is significant in Russian history and this connection is made between the opera and other arts of nineteenth-century Russia. These changes are, musically, rather small, but historically and socially, significant.

The importance of the people as a functioning character in the opera has precedence in art and literature in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth-century and is related to the Populist movement. Most importantly, the change in endings between the two versions alters the entire meaning of the composition. This study suggests that this is a political statement on the part of the composer.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the field of musicology the study of opera is unique because of its strong connections with other fields of research. For instance, artists trying to understand or depict a certain time might study the appropriate corresponding costuming, staging, and set decoration, or dancers may study earlier performances to learn movements or styles from previous times. Further, it is even possible to study opera for its historical ties, both to the time period the opera depicts, and to the time in which the opera was written. By including all of these factors in an analysis of an opera, a better picture emerges of the social and historical context for the work.

This idea gains practical importance when applied to an opera such as *Boris Godunov*, written by Modest Musorgsky between 1869 and 1874. The opera was based on a historical event and was written using historical records and stories of the event. Therefore, the opera is not simply the story of Boris Godunov, but also a document of the changes made to the true events by later historians and artists. Writing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Musorgsky infused the politics of the day into his opera; thus, *Boris Godunov* became a multi-layered picture of the time surrounding Boris Godunov, including the politics and philosophies of the time. While the music of Musorgsky, and later changes and additions by other composers, has received much attention, the historical and cultural implications have been largely overlooked.

Musorgsky (1839 –1881) based the libretto for his opera on the writings of two men: Nicholas Karamzin (1766 – 1826) and Alexander Pushkin (1799 – 1837). Both had

written on the story of Boris Godunov and his contributions to Russian history. Musorgsky incorporated their interpretations of events while making his own additions to the story. Most significantly, Musorgsky changed the ending of the opera to include a look ahead to the Russia of the seventeenth century and the Russia of the late nineteenth century. This seemingly small change has great implications for the opera and, more importantly, for the way the opera has influenced modern histories concerning Boris Godunov.

To achieve this change at the conclusion of the work, Musorgsky used the character of the *Yrodivy*, or Fool, to convey his message to the audience. In the first version of the opera the Fool sings a short song predicting trouble for Russia to come. This is then followed by the death of the Tsar, Boris Godunov. In the revised version of the work, these scenes are rearranged and the opera closes with the Fool's lament. The trouble now predicted is still to come following the opera's conclusion; this is a vision for the audience, not for the characters onstage. Musorgsky is clearly making a statement about Russia, both in the seventeenth century and the nineteenth century. By studying the opera's genesis and the events surrounding both the life of Boris Godunov and the life of Modest Musorgsky this statement will become clear. Musorgsky is speaking directly to the Russian audience of the 1870's.

Finally, Richard Taruskin comments that the fool is "the voice of one who knows the unhappy future because for him it is in the past. At one level of disembodiment beyond the visible body on the stage, it is the voice of the chronicler, the super-Pimen who has penned the opera, the composer-Yurodiviy who sees and speaks the truth, and

whose name is Musorgsky."[1] This is an intriguing concept, and one that has not been previously considered by music historians. It seems, however, that Taruskin has not carried this statement any further. This study will establish the connection that exists between Musorgsky and the Fool.

By better understanding the historical context surrounding the writing of the opera it is possible to interpret many other aspects of the story itself, the history, and the implications and judgments made by the composer. This will lead to new insights into *Boris Godunov*.

[1] Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 80.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORIES OF BORIS GODUNOV

Boris Godunov was a friend and companion of Tsar Ivan IV (r. 1533 – 84), known as Ivan the Terrible. This friendship is demonstrated by the many promotions and various offices held by Boris during Ivan's reign. Clearly Boris was a favorite of the Tsar, for Ivan was instrumental in Boris being named as one of the five members of the council of advisors to Ivan's heir.[1] Around 1580 Ivan arranged for his son to marry Boris's sister. The marriage of Tsarevich Fedor and Irina Godunova showed the strength of this friendship, and in turn, made it stronger still. This step made Boris truly a member of the inner family of the Tsar.

In 1584 Tsar Ivan died and his son Fedor became tsar. Fedor was thirty years old when he took the throne and he reigned for fourteen years. History books are unanimous in condemning Fedor as being unfit for rule. Sergei Platonov says that Fedor was "completely incompetent,"[2] and Stephen Graham says that even Ivan "referred to him scoffingly as a bell ringer."[3] Many books also relate that Fedor was very religious and perhaps his reliance on religious inspiration for decision making was part of what was perceived poorly by his peers. Whatever the reason, Fedor allowed a group of advisors to rule the country while he spent most of his time in the church. Boris quickly became the most powerful member of this group of advisors, and the country seemingly flourished

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[1] This fondness Tsar Ivan had for Boris Godunov is discussed by many authors, including Sergei Platonov, *Boris Godunov: Tsar of Russia*, trans. L. Rex Pyles (Gulf Breeze, Florida: Academic International Press, 1973), 7.
[2] Ibid., 8.
[3] Stephen Graham, *Boris Godunov* (London: Ernst Benn, 1933), 49.

under this leadership. This is clearly seen in the gaining of foreign lands near the Gulf of Finland and the area known as Georgia becoming a vassal to the Russian government, as well as gains made in the church that strengthened the position of Russia in Europe and worldwide.

In 1589 Boris helped his friend Metropolitan Job, who was also the head of the Russian Church, to become a patriarch, which is the highest position in the Orthodox Church. This was soon followed by appointments for many new bishops, archbishops, and other religious leaders in Russia, and was a source of great pride to the people of Russia. Obviously Fedor approved of this step, but it probably would not have happened without the intercession of Boris. Because of his devotion to his religion Fedor allowed Boris to take over most of the country's affairs that dealt with economics, foreign affairs, and other matters of state allowing Fedor to become strictly a religious figure. During the reigns of Ivan IV and other, earlier tsars there customarily were a group of advisors close to the tsar who shared in some of the leadership positions. By the summer of 1587 Fedor was advised solely by Boris, and between them they controlled all elements ruling the country.[4] Godunov now had the right to conduct international affairs on behalf of the Russian government and had his own court outside that of Fedor. When Fedor died in January, 1598, at the age of forty-four, Boris Godunov stood prepared to rule the country.

Immediately after the death of Fedor, his widow Irina was proclaimed the new Tsaritsa. Irina, however, decided to become a nun and give up her rule. The final connection to Ivan, through the marriage of Fedor and Boris's sister Irina, was now lost.

[4] Platonov, 38.

A note of irony is that Ivan himself had facilitated the end of his family rule by removing other family members from the court, and even the country, in order to strengthen his rule. Since Ivan had single-handedly led the country, now Boris could do the same.[5]

Boris at first actually followed his sister, figuratively and literally, to the convent and suggested that he also intended to renounce the throne and devote himself solely to the church. He stayed at Novodevitchy monastery for about a month, from late January of 1598 to late February. The country was confused as to who would rule. One possible heir was Fedor Romanov, who had a tie to the family of Ivan through marriage. A rumor that has survived says that Tsar Fedor, upon his deathbed, had offered his crown to Fedor Romanov, who declined and offered it to his brothers, each of whom also declined. The country was in turmoil and the position of Tsar was sure to be a difficult one for anyone to assume. While Boris was living at the monastery he was approached many times by Patriarch Job, among others, who pleaded with Boris to accept the position of Tsar with his sister's blessing. Boris declined all of these offers. Other accounts say that Boris had calculated even these events and was actually running the country from inside the monastery, which is probably true. Whether through his own planning or simply luck, the decision of Boris to wait for popular opinion to push for his leadership was provident. Boris was elected by an assembly (the Zemskii Sobor) with the Patriarch organizing and dominating the planning and events. Even at this event Boris appeared to attempt to decline the position, but eventually he accepted and on February 26, 1598 Boris first

[5] Information on the reigns of Ivan, Fedor, and Boris based on information from Riasanovsky and Platonov.

appeared in the royal dress. The official coronation was not held until September of that year, according to the new Tsar's wishes.

Boris Godunov ruled Russia from 1598 until his death in 1605. During this time the country experienced a severe famine that lasted from 1601 to 1603. Although the famine was caused by bad weather and subsequent crop failures, events beyond the control of the new tsar, it caused many problems for Boris. The country experienced many other social, economic, and political problems that also eroded the popularity of Boris. From the perspective of history some of these events are to see, but to the people of Russia it seemed as though the country was somehow cursed. Such was the opening for the opponents of Boris to usurp his leadership. Throughout his reign, a rumor circulated that Boris had caused the death of a true heir to the Russian throne, or that possibly the child had escaped and was in hiding somewhere awaiting his chance to take the Russian throne. This rumor of a true heir to the Russian throne was a constant threat to Boris's rule. The questions of Romanov rule, or of the survival of Ivan's son Dmitri, were all the more powerful because Boris had allowed his inner circle to become so small that he had no power base within his own government. Boris had gained the throne in large part because he had the support of the masses, but the troubles during his leadership led to the withdrawal of this popular support.[6]

When Boris died in 1605, the false Dmitri quickly assumed power; Boris's wife and son were murdered, and his daughter was forced to join a convent. Although the troubles were not yet over for the people of Russia, one short-lived dynasty had quickly

[6] Riasanovsky, 160-161.

seen its end. Between 1605 and 1613 the country was ruled by two separate impostors, each claiming to be Dmitri, the son of Ivan IV, and also by Basil Shuisky, a prince who had supported the first pretender.[7] Finally, the sixteen-year old Mikhail Romanov was elected tsar by the Zemskii Sobor, and, when that news met with the approval of the public, Mikhail was crowned on July 21, 1613. Mikhail quickly asked the Zemskii Sobor to participate in his new government and slowly began the task of rebuilding the country. The Romanov family would rule Russia for the next three hundred years, and, as will be shown, its stories would not be kind to the history of Boris Godunov.

History books differ in their accounts of Boris's aspirations. Some suggest that perhaps he was only serving Ivan and then Fedor loyally until history intervened and made him Tsar. While this opinion is held by the minority, it seems to have some credibility. It does appear that Boris initially was only serving his ruler, and there is no evidence that he ever tried to usurp Ivan's power; only when opportunity presented itself did he take advantage of the power offered him. It is improbable that Boris planned to take full leadership of Russia at a time when Tsar Ivan was still alive with three living sons. By the end of Fedor's reign the other heirs had all died and Boris smoothly moved into the role of Tsar.

The death of Prince Dmitri, who was the son of Ivan's seventh wife Marya Nagaya, is one of the greatest mysteries in Russia. The child and his mother were sent away from Moscow to the town of Uglich after the death of Ivan. There they lived

[7] The first pretender is usually identified as Gregory Otrepiev, and it is possible he truly believed himself to be Dmitri. He ruled Russia for a short time before being killed in an uprising. The second pretender has never been clearly identified and is clear that this second person never pretended within his circle to be

peacefully, but under the watchful eye of Boris and his spies. On May 15, 1591, Dmitri was found dead from a knife wound to the throat. Almost immediately the supporters of Dmitri and his mother attacked the supposed spies of Boris and, in retaliation for the death of the child, murdered as many of the spies as they could find. When news of the events reached Moscow, an official inquiry was made into the event of the child's death. The official report filed indicated that Dmitri, while playing after Mass, had an epileptic fit and stabbed himself with the knife. The only known eyewitnesses were other children, some of whom were the children of Boris's followers.

Questions concerning this event surrounded the rule of Boris and have remained popular almost to the present day. Did the child simply stab himself and die, or was he murdered, and if so, who had him murdered and why? Popular history has always blamed Boris for the child's death, and portrayed this act as the beginning of the downfall of Boris Godunov. Certainly the townspeople of Uglich believed that the death was ordered by Boris, and the Orthodox Church eventually proclaimed Dmitri a martyr and canonized the child in 1606. In so doing the church had an official account of Dmitri's life written, and this account clearly shows the political leanings of the church. Authors have discussed this account of the child's life as being filled with misrepresentations and that later accounts based on these earlier writings only served to enhance the fairy-tale quality of the story.[8] Authors told in great detail the story, giving exact places, times, and

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Dmitri, but only to use the identity when it suited him. This person escaped Russia when sentiment turned against him, and he was never found. Riasanovsky, 161, 166.

[8] Platonov says that in these stories the "fate of the tsarevich was set forth in completely incredible, naïve and fairytale-like details," 140.

persons involved, when, in fact, most of these facts were never known, not even immediately after the death of Dmitri.

Early writers of Russian history heard and believed these accounts. Nicholas Karamzin, the first major writer of Russian history, claims that Boris was "overthrown by the shadow of the tsarevich he had slain,"[9] without a word of doubt entering into his account of the events, and this belief was typical. It remained for later generations to approach the story with some skepticism. Stephen Graham, writing in 1933, shows a variation on the guilt of Boris by stating that "it is improbable that he actually ordered the murder of the Tsarevich Dmitri,"[10] while suggesting that Boris might have still been involved with the murder.

Platonov stands out for his argument for Boris' innocence. Writing around 1910, he suggests that the death of Dmitri would not have been uppermost on the mind of Boris in 1591. For one thing, the marriage of Ivan and Marya was not legal in the Orthodox Church, which might have made Dmitri ineligible to inherit the Russian throne. Moreover, at the time of the murder Fedor was still alive and could still have had heirs of his own. He goes on to say that "all evidence indicates that many contemporaries questioned Boris's guilt in the death of the tsarevich."[11] Riasanovsky interprets Platonov to further suggest that had Boris been involved in the murder he "would have staged the murder much more skillfully, without immediate leads to his agents and associates."[12]

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[9] Nicholas Karamzin, *Karamzin's Memoir on Ancient and Modern History*, trans. Richard Pipes (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959), 113.
[10] Graham, 62.
[11] Platonov, 142.
[12] Riasanovsky, 156.

A firm distinction must be made between the writings of Karamzin and his contemporaries at the start of the nineteenth-century and those of Riasanovsky, Platonov, and other twentieth-century writers. The revolution of 1917 dramatically changed life in Russia, and also changed the histories of the country, including the history of Boris Godunov. In discussing the concept of history in Russia Svetlana Evdokimova says that until the nineteenth century;

> Russia had no formal historiography… Literature came to fulfill those functions that were divided in the West among various disciplines and areas of human knowledge such as philosophy, theology, history, ethics, aesthetics, law, and political science.[13]

This demonstrates how literature came to fill the place of historical writing in Russia and why such emphasis is placed on the literature of the country. In essence a great story or novel could become historical fact, even when this involved eliminating historical accuracies.

Nicholas Karamzin is perhaps the most famous early writer of Russian history. His *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia*, written in 1811, and *History of the Russian State*, begun about 1816 at the request of Tsar Alexander, demonstrate that "all history is that of the triumphant state, which is a patrimony of the tsar, whose moral qualities determine success or failure."[14] Written at the request of the tsar, the *History of the Russian State* was written to give a moral education to the people of Russia, as well as a historical education. James Billington goes on to say that "this work… at times seems

[13] Svetlana Evdokimova, *Pushkin's Historical Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1.
[14] James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 262.

closer to the historical romances of Walter Scott than to analytic history."[15] Here then, is a melding of the two types of Russian history: there is still a strong connection to storytelling while at the same time an attempt is being made to show some historical accuracy's. Tsar Alexander was a member of the Romanov family which ruled Russia from 1613 until the revolution of 1917, and the history written by Karamzin seems to suggest that the Romanov family saved Russia from the troubles caused by Boris. As we have seen, the historical facts show that the events of Boris's reign were not all within his control, but this is not the aim of Karamzin's writings.

Writing in the first part of the nineteenth century, Karamzin clearly espouses the earlier view of history. He viewed history as a vehicle for the historical, moral, and political education of the people. His writings were extremely influential on the development of Russian historiography and were popular books for generations. The books incorporated historical facts, along with his version of storytelling, in which "the rise and fall of whole epochs are traced in terms of the personal virtues and vices of Russia's rulers."[16] Boris was a popular villain and fit the overall scheme of the works well. Therefore, it is clear how this simplistic version of the events at Uglich, and indeed, the overall opinions about Boris Godunov, gained popularity in Russia. By taking a popular viewpoint of the historical events, and attaching to them religious and moral views, the reader could learn all subjects necessary in one work. This may help to

[15] Ibid., 263.
[16] Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.14.

explain why the factual story of events is often seen as an afterthought to the more fanciful, storytale version.

Another aspect of historical writing that was popular in the nineteenth century can be associated with the period of the Enlightenment. Evdokimova discusses a concept that imposes "causal patterns on past events" and says that by "excluding everything accidental, the historian turns history into destiny."[17] In Russian history the person Boris Godunov has been used to demonstrate the many vices of human nature and the penalties thereof. The very real problems relating to the drought conditions in Russia are relegated to mere footnotes while the problems of the country are traced to Boris's evil nature. It is easy to see how this idea was included in a positive way in many histories of the nineteenth century, including the American idea of manifest destiny.

Alexander Pushkin, clearly the most important writer in the history of Russia, understood this concept clearly but recognized the difficulties in connecting it with Russian history. In some ways most histories do not fit a clear path of continual forward progress. For instance the reigns of Ivan IV and Boris, in some ways, would be classified as regressive rather than progressive. While some advances were certainly made during this time, the negatives outweighed the positives. This causes a problem in writing a progressive history.

Although Pushkin wrote his *Boris Godunov* in 1824 - 25, it was not performed until 1870 and was not successful even at this late date. Originally the play contained twenty-five scenes, of which two were cut before the first performance. For the audience

[17] Evdokimova, 53.

of today, it is even more remote, relying as it does on a belief that the audience is familiar with the work of Karamzin as a basis for understanding the chosen scenes of Pushkin's. The two main characters of the play, Boris and the pretender to the throne, appear rarely and their appearances contradict historical chronology, skipping over many important developments in the plot. Most importantly, the idea of fate as the determining factor in the characters' lives, as shown by Karamzin, is here eliminated, replaced by the later Romantic view that persons make their own destiny.

Platonov says that "Pushkin's *Boris* is a tragedy not of character, but of fate.…By the standards of his time he (Boris) was guilty neither of sin nor of crime."[18] The title character of Boris is shown as one surrounded by events and persons that he cannot control. In reality it was the drought and public opinion that proved to be Boris's downfall. By selecting elements easily depicted on stage, Pushkin altered the focus of the story without changing the ending.

It is clear that the major figure in the play *Boris Godunov* is not Boris himself. Nor is it the pretender. The only "characters" consistently present in the play are the people of Russia. They are the framework for the entire play; from the beginning when they are told to hail their new king Boris, to the end when they lead the pretender off toward the throne in Moscow, the people of Russia are the primary focus. In so doing Pushkin has made a major change to the tale of Boris; the story is now a human tragedy instead of a morality play. Starting where Karamzin left off, he takes the story of a great national tragedy and personalizes it for individual citizens. This may also account for

[18] Platonov, 205.

some of the story's continued popularity over the years. The title of the play refers not only to the person of Boris Godunov, but also to the time period and events surrounding his rule.

Pushkin continues to personalize the story by portraying the general public not as heroes, but rather uninformed and uncaring masses. This brings an element of reality to a story that could have been simply pure good versus pure evil. While it would have been a popular choice to have the people function as heroes that would not have been historically accurate. At that time the people played a very small role in the decisions of the country and portraying then as heroes would have implied again, a fairytale quality to the story. This idea was redeveloped during the twentieth century in an attempt to make the people more seem more heroic. This view shows that, as Caryl Emerson explains, "the people's consciousness matured during the play, from passively cynical in the first scenes to passively defiant in the end. The *narod* had achieved potentially heroic status."[19] Emerson's quote intrigues with the terms "passively cynical" and "passively defiant," for how can either of these be defined? It is an oxymoron to declare something both passive and passionate at the same time, but her description is accurate in this instance. The character of the chorus was redefined in exactly this way. In order for this idea to be accepted, subtle changes needed to be made in the understanding of the play. Most importantly, the people had to be portrayed as changing and developing, even though their responses to the various governmental changes remain the same. For

[19] Caryl Emerson, *Boris Godunov: Transpositions of a Russian Theme* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), 136.

example, the silence of the people was reinterpreted during various scenes.[20] This twentieth-century concept helped change the overall impression of the story and create the view of the people as heroes instead of simply bystanders. According to Emerson, "to give the people energy and visibility, as Pushkin does, is not to give them a progressive direction or a sense of history."[21] Here is an example of how Pushkin demonstrated his concept of storytelling without using progressive development. Again, a twentieth-century interpretation of the same telling changes the story to include progression. This sense of history has already been discussed, and it is easy to see how it is used to advantage here. By redefining the people, a sense of forward progress can be seen in the play. But this is only possible using a modern interpretation of the work.

In 1869, about forty-five years after Pushkin wrote his *Boris Godunov,* Musorgsky began his opera, using the play of Pushkin as his primary source for text. The text used by Musorgsky is often directly from Pushkin, although sometimes the composer made changes in the text or wrote new texts altogether. The libretto for the opera was denounced by critics of the day "for being unfaithful to Pushkin's actual verse line – however problematic that verse had proved for the stage."[22] Concepts and ideas from both Pushkin and Karamzin were used by Musorgsky in writing his story of *Boris Godunov*. From Pushkin he borrowed all of his scenes, and, like Pushkin, he relied on his audience to know the Karamzin history. Because of this, Musorgsky quickly was criticized for two elements of his opera. First, that there was no love interest; and second,

[20] Many authors discuss the understanding of the chorus and other possible interpretations. Examples can be seen in Evdokimova, 58-60, Emerson 180-181, and Eric Plaut, *Mirror of the Western Mind* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc, 1993), 129-131.
[21] Emerson, 136.

that the scenes did not flow smoothly from one to the next. This can be seen in Figure 1, which shows the written scenes of Pushkin, the performed scenes of Pushkin, and the scenes in the first version of the opera by Musorgsky. Clearly Musorsgky was showing only selected scenes from a story he expected his audience to know thoroughly. This is similar to the Pushkin play. The numerous scenes that are dropped contain important facts about the story that cannot be assumed only by hearing, or seeing, these few scenes. Importantly, Musorgsky also chose to cut the scene in Marina's boudoir and the fountain scene from his first version. This, as we shall see would be a stumbling block for the opera's acceptance.

[22] Ibid., 146.

Figure 1: Pushkin and Musorgsky Scenes

Pushkin's written scenes	Pushkin's performed scenes	Musorgsky's version I
1. Kremlin Palace	1. Kremlin Palace	
2. Red Square		
3. Field, Novodevitchy	2. Field, Novodevitchy	1. Novodevitchy
4. Kremlin Palace		2. Kremlin
5. Pimen's Cell	3. Cell	3. Cell
6. Patriarch's Palace		
7. Tsars Quarters (Palace)	4. Palace	
8. Inn on Lithuanian Border	5. Inn	4. Inn
9. Shuisky's House	6. Shuisky's House	
10. Tsar's Palace	7. Palace	5. Palace
11. Krakow	8. Krakow	
12. Governor's Palace/ Marina's Boudoir	9. Marina's Boudoir	
13. Fountain Scene	10. Governors Palace/ Fountain Scene	
14. Lithuanian Border		
15. Royal Duma	11. Tsar's Council	
16. Plain near Novgorod		

17. Outside St Basil's	12. Outside St Basil's	6. Outside St Basil's
18. Sevsk	13. Sevsk	
19. Forest		
20. Tsar's Palace	14. Tsar's Palace	
21. Military Headquarters	15. Military Headquarters	
22. Place of Executions	16. Place of Executions / Kremlin Scene	
23. Kremlin		7. Kremlin

Another element present for Pushkin and Musorgsky was the ruling Romanov family. As earlier discussed, the end of the Time of Troubles came with the reign of Mikhail Romanov (1613-45) and the start of the Romanov dynasty. The Romanov family ruled Russia throughout the lifetimes of both Pushkin and Musorgsky, and that influence can be seen in both versions of the story. First, the character of Boris became even more of a villain to better juxtapose the elements of good and evil, as seen in the Romanov's and Boris. In the nineteenth century laws had also been passed that the Tsar, as a character, could not be seen onstage. Both authors lobbied for permission to use the character of Boris in the productions. Second, at certain times it was against the law to show religious places, such as Novodevitchy convent and St. Basil's Cathedral, onstage. This obviously hindered performances in Russia and quite possibly had an impact on the works chosen for artistic interpretations.

Another aspect of nineteenth-century life that had a great effect on Musorgsky was the increased popularity of all elements of folk life. Finally, Russian art began to develop its own ideals and characteristics, instead of simply borrowing elements of Western European countries. The concept of art music unique to Russia, rather than a copy of French or Italian musical styles, was only beginning to develop in the 1860s. In his music, Musorgsky consciously tried to imitate the sounds of the Russian language and the patterns of Russian speech. Emerson connects this to Pushkin by saying that "in the 1820s Pushkin had stunned neoclassical sensibilities by casting the common people in neutral, literary speech; in the 1860s Musorgsky reworked that vocal line into cruder and even more colloquial popular expression."[23] The following chapter shows more specific examples of Musorgsky's writing and the connection to folk elements. Here, it will suffice to say that all things Russian permeated the mind of the composer while writing *Boris Godunov* -- not only the musical aspects, but also the history and literature of Russia.

[23] Ibid., 176.

CHAPTER III

TWO VISIONS OF *BORIS GODUNOV*

For every creative work there must first be a vision in the creator's mind, be he a painter, poet, or musician. It follows logically that each time another artist assumes the work of a different artist and changes it to fit his own medium, the vision of the work is changed somewhat, whether intentionally or not. Beyond this change, if the original concept of one artist changes and he revises the work itself, for any reason, again a new vision is attained. Such is the case with the story of *Boris Godunov*. In fact, the artistic visions of Boris have become so strong they actually block the historically based accounts and have almost become substitute history in themselves. The two versions of the opera written by Musorgsky differ significantly in many ways and both must be considered in understanding the opera as a whole.

The opera *Boris Godunov* by Modest Musorgsky has influenced a popular view of the Russian Tsar Boris Godunov. The facts of Boris's life have become lost in the storyline of the opera. Even within the versions of Musorgsky's opera the story of Boris changes, and this leads to more confusion concerning the true story. Also, after the death of Musorgsky, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Pavel Lamm, and Dmitri Shostakovich made other changes to the opera. These latter changes will not be considered here, but the story of Musorgsky's original conception of the work, and his changes to it, are certainly enough to illuminate our point.

Musorgsky completed his first version of *Boris Godunov* in 1869, and titled the work an *opera dialogue*. The concept of this first work was to be an "unbroken recitative setting of an unaltered text,"[1] an idea that was to figure heavily in the revision of the opera. This version was a musical setting of seven of Pushkin's twenty-three scenes (discussed in chapter 2) using, to a great extent, the original text of Pushkin.[2] The scenes Musorgsky chose to set from Pushkin are most of the scenes that include the character of Boris. This text lent itself well to the idea of *opera dialogue* "by its wealth of beautiful (and famous) soliloquies."[3] The idea of an *opera dialogue* was clearly defined by Cesar Cui in the 1860s as an opera that "must be a careful and sensitive setting, in recitative style, of a good text... with little reliance on closed forms or traditional musical logic."[4] The first version was then submitted to the Imperial Theater for performance consideration, and the request was turned down in 1871. Here began a significant chapter in the myth of *Boris Godunov*.

The submission of the opera for performance consideration to the Imperial Theater received much attention in the early part of this century, and most of these writings seem based more on degrading the state-run theater than on reflecting the facts of the situation accurately. As these events become further removed in time, thoughts

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[1]Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67.

[2]See Figure 1 in Chapter 2 for detailed description on the differences between the play of Pushkin and the opera of Musorgsky.

[3]Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 224.

concerning them hopefully become more objectively based. The facts of the submission and the committee's suggestions have been well documented by Caryl Emerson and Richard Taruskin, and can also be read in firsthand accounts of other composers and critics of the day in the collection by Alexandra Orlova.[5] First the opera was submitted in the spring of 1870, at a time when the committee was on summer break. Second, the repertoire for the next season had already been determined and the best Musorgsky could hope for was a performance in the 1871-72 season. Third, in making the decision to turn down the production, the committee first praised the talent of Musorgsky and then virtually promised performance of the work once the changes were made to include a female lead and a love song. There is no mention made of unusual harmonies or scoring problems, or even, for that matter, any discussion concerning the work as a *dialogue* and the lack of lyricism this implied. Many writers and historians have implied that the opera was revised only to please the misguided tastes of this committee, but it appears that this was not the only, or even the primary, reason, for Musorgsky's revision. As will be seen, Musorgsky made many more changes to the opera than prescribed by the committee; their importance to the overall revision must be reconsidered.

Immediately after the first version was denied performance, Musorgsky set about revising his work. The apparent enthusiasm Musorgsky gave to this revision implies that he was in favor of the changes he was making to the opera, and that Musorgsky even

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[4]Emerson and Oldani, 79.

5 Alexandra Orlova, *Musorgsky Remembered,* trans. Veronique Zaytzell (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

preferred the revision to the original. The changes were begun on the same day the rejection notice was received and some of these changes must have been conceived before even receiving this notice. These changes will be discussed presently, but here it is important to note that this first version, or vision, has never been performed, either during Musorgsky's life or anytime following his death.

The composer's acceptance of drastic changes in his original work, and the lack of a single performance of this work, gives weight to the acceptance of the second version of *Boris Godunov* as the more authoritative of the two. This view differs with that of writers on the subject in the first part of the twentieth century, including Boris Asafyev, Gerald Abraham, and Michel-Dimitri Calvororessi, who saw the revision only in terms of governmental pressure influencing creative genius. Such a view is more a reflection of early twentieth-century thought than a factor of life in nineteenth-century Russia. In discussing this consideration, Arthur Jacobs writes:

> Only with knowledge of the musical and biographical background are we able to decide whether a composer's later version must be taken as superseding his first thoughts, or whether the later version represents an unwilling, 'forced' amendment which ought now to be discarded. Or have we a free choice between them - or even the possibility of combining the two Musorgsky operas?[6]

Thus, the authority of one version over the other is still a question being discussed, and one that will probably continue to be debated throughout the next century and beyond. In making his revisions, Musorgsky greatly changed many aspects of his work and, indeed, may have totally changed his concept of the work. His original designation of the work

[6]Arthur Jacobs, "Will the Real Boris Godunov Please Stand Up?" *Opera* 22, no.5 (1971): 388.

as an *opera dialogue* had caused difficulties for him from the very beginning. In performing pieces from the opera for his friends, confusion arose over using this term for a story that was essentially a drama. *Opera dialogue* had been a term reserved for comic works and even this learned audience was confused by the emotions of the characters. As Emerson says, "if even colleagues and friends could not distinguish between tragedy and comedy in his music, what hope was there for theatergoers at large?"[7] What had been an *opera dialogue* became in the 1872 edition a tragic opera. A conclusion with the death of Boris was superseded by the addition of the "fool" character and his prediction of the future of Russia. Many folk songs were inserted throughout the second version of the opera. Finally, Musorgsky created the entire second act, with the Polish scenes, the female role, and love interest. These changes will be our next concern, but first we must see how the several versions by Musorgsky differ. This is shown in Figure 2.[8]

The simplest major change to see and to understand in the version of 1872 is the addition of the new Act III, the so-called "Polish Act." This act introduces the desired female lead, and therefore the love duet of the opera. Also, by including the locale of a foreign country into the production Musorgsky was able to include Polish dance music and incorporate an element of exoticism in the second version. In this movement, too,

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[7]Emerson and Oldani, 76.

[8] Figure 2 is a comparison of the first version, second version, first performance, and first published score of the opera, and is based on information in Robert Oldani, "Mussorgsky's *Boris* on the Stage of the Maryinsky Theater: A Chronicle of the First Production," *The Opera Quarterly* 4 (Summer 1986): 75 – 92: Edward Reilly, "Scorography: The Music of Musorgsky," *Musical Newsletter* 4, no.4 (1974): 10-17: Taruskin, and Modest Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov*, ed. David Lloyd-Jones.

Musorgsky wrote music that was much more lyrical than any he included in version one, and eliminated his designation of this work as an *opera dialogue*.

The characters of Marina (the love interest) and Rangoni (the power behind the pretender) are introduced in this scene, but the importance of these characters is debatable. It is possible that Musorgsky here depicts an artificial love, revealing in a subtly musical context the superflousness of such characters. Such a statement would have been important to Musorgsky and would have allowed him to demonstrate his ideas, without at the same time losing the approval of the performance committee. Edward Reilly observes that "the new material is carefully worked out, not as a vehicle for the display of Romantic passion, but to show the *deceptiveness* of such passion and how it can be used and diverted to other ends."[9] In this instance it seems that Musorgsky succeeded in accomplishing both of his goals. Therefore, any importance placed on the

[9]Reilly, 12.

Figure 2: Different versions of Musorgsky's Opera

Version I – 1869	Version II – 1872	First performance – 1874	Published Vocal Score - 1874
Act I - 1. Novodevitchy Monastery 2. Kremlin	Prologue - 1. Novodevitchy Monastery 2. Kremlin	Prologue - made into one scene – "The call of Boris to the Throne"	Prologue - 1. Novodevitchy Monastery - partially cut 2. Kremlin
Act II - 1. Pimen's Cell 2. Inn	Act I - 1. Pimen's Cell 2. Inn – with added Hostess song	Act 1 - cell scene cut 1. Inn with Hostess song	Act I - 1. Pimen's cell - narrative cut 2. Inn with Hostess song
Act III – Palace	Act II - Palace – same events but music rewritten	Act II - Palace	Act II - Palace - music of version 2 with minor cuts
	Act III - 1. Marina's Boudoir 2. Fountain Scene	Act III - 1. Marina's Boudoir 2. Fountain Scene	Act III - 1. Marina's Boudoir 2. Fountain Scene
Act IV - 1. Outside of St Basil's 2. Kremlin	Act IV - 1. Kremlin 2. Kromy Forest	Act IV - 1. Kremlin Act V - 1. Kromy Forest - with some cuts	Act IV - 1. Kremlin - partially cut 2. Kromy Forest

addition of these two characters is probably overstated.

Another change from version one to version two is the inclusion of many folk songs in the latter score. The only folk music contained in the first version of the opera is in the "Slava" chorus of the coronation scene. The other folk songs are introduced in the second version as a way of including the people of Russia within the opera. In this second version the people become, figuratively, another character of the opera. They are used in the innkeeper's song, at the end of the inn scene, and in the chorus scene at the

end of the opera. The chorus functions as a single character, expressing a single emotion each time it is present. There is no attempt to distinguish one individual from the group. These songs serve not only to connect the people as a character but also to introduce a lyrical element to the opera that had been absent in the original version, and the use of folk music to make this connection can clearly be connected to Musorgsky's professed admiration for the folk and all things Russian.

The single most important change from version one to version two of *Boris Godunov* involves the final act and the conclusion of the opera. In the first version, the final act has first the scene outside of St. Basil's with the character of the Simpleton, or Fool, known as *Yrodivy*, actually confronting Boris and then singing his song of lament foreshadowing the death of Boris. This scene is followed by the death of Boris, which concludes the opera. In the revised version, the first scene is cut, the act opens with the death of Boris, and then concludes with the revolutionary scene in Kromy Forest. This new scene does include some music that was included in the St. Basil's scene in version one. The inclusion of this music here demonstrates that Musorgsky did not intend for elements of both versions to be performed at the same time, as there would be no reason to repeat the same music.

The importance of this change is also seen in other composers' reworking of Musorgsky's score. Rimsky-Korsakov, the first to revise the opera, chose to place the Kromy Forest scene before the death of Boris. This conclusion differs from that chosen by Musorgsky in all of his revisions following 1869. The version of *Boris Godunov* orchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov was frequently performed and, for that reason, was

much better known to opera audiences early in this century than was the version by Musorgsky, which concluded with the Kromy Forest scene. In an attempt to rectify this problem more recent performances often include both the scene outside of St. Basil's and the Kromy Forest scene, which clearly was never a conception of Musorgsky's. This compromise creates unnecessary duplication of music and events and only serves to confuse. This idea is "nonsensical - a plan that not even Rimsky-Korsakov envisaged, let alone the composer."[10]

In the second version by Musorgsky, the opera closes with the Simpleton again singing his song of lament, but now the lament is for the whole of Russia and the troubles that are yet to come, instead of simply the death of Boris. Taruskin claims that this Yrodivy is:

> the voice of one who knows the unhappy future because for him it is in the past. At one level of disembodiment beyond the visible body on the stage, it is the voice of the chronicler, the super-Pimen who has penned the opera, the composer-yurodiviy who sees and speaks the truth, and whose name is Musorgsky.[11]

There can be no overstating the importance of this change. Whether Musorgsky was fully conscious of the different interpretations of this version or not, the entire view of the story line changes with this one scene change. The people truly become the focus of the work, as has been hinted at with the inclusion of folk songs and more chorus scenes. The character of the fool, who has been the only person to view the entire story

[10]Jacobs, 395.

[11]Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 80.

with clear vision, now is the only character to understand the truth: that the people have again fallen for an impostor to the throne and that trouble will surely follow. This conclusion demonstrates the genre of the tragedy, and finally removes all vestiges of the *opera dialogue* first conceived by Musorgsky.

Even the most up-to-date full score of the opera, prepared by David Lloyd-Jones in 1975, includes compromises and judgment calls. The title page states that this score contains "the complete original texts of Musorgsky's "initial" (1869) and "definitive" (1872) versions,"[12] but music from the first version not included in the second version is relegated to an appendix at the end of the second volume. Surely this places a value on the second version as being more legitimate than the first. The same value is demonstrated by the quotation marks around the words "initial" and "definitive" on the title page. It has not been shown that Musorgsky ever referred to the two versions in this way but Lloyd-Jones is clearly granting a measure of authority to the 1872 version.

Another example of the publication problems concerning Musorgsky's *Boris Godunov* is that the scores published by Pavel Lamm in 1928 and the David Lloyd-Jones edition both include all possible music in the common scenes between the two Musorgsky versions. For example, in Act II forty-three measures were cut by Musorgsky in his 1872 version, but those cuts have been reinserted in the editions, lengthening the final version. Again, a case where elements Musorgsky never intended have been put

[12]Modest Musorgsky, *Boris Godunov: Polyglot,* ed. David Lloyd-Jones (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1.

together by later editors. If the 1872 version were said to be definitive, then there would be simply no need to reinstate material the composer himself had removed in this version.

Editors appear to be making another error simply by their attempt to give equal precedence to both versions. Reilly states that "most attempts to revive the original *Boris* (which original is rarely indicated) generally merge portions of both conceptions, and in fact modify Musorgsky's work as radically as did Rimsky-Korsakov."[13] There are no easy answers. Admirers of history will probably always be in favor of the second version because of its dramatic ending and view toward the future of Russia. The dialogue idea of the first version is unique and demonstrates an important part of Musorgsky's developmental process of the work and is therefore of primary importance to the music historian. Finally, the question of performance always ends in a discussion of the versions of the opera reorchestrated by Rimsky-Korsakov and Shostakovich, which detail a performance history the original composer could have never imagined.

As originally stated, the opera *Boris Godunov* by Modest Musorgsky presents a wide range of musicological problems and considerations that must be actively considered by anyone hoping to interpret the work of this master composer. Even without providing simple solutions, these problems provide insight into the time of the composer, his musical style, and the outside influences on his work. Surely all of these will help in gaining a better perspective of this monumental composition.

[13] Reilly, 12.

Which version then can be said to be the true, or authoritative, vision of the composer? The original was never performed, the first performance varied significantly from both the second version and from the published vocal score, and the first score published was not performed. This discussion does not even include the multiple versions of the score orchestrated and revised by other composers. The following chapters will show how the second version of the opera came to be the true vision for Musorgsky.

CHAPTER IV

THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE AND THE FOOL

The study of Russia and Russian music is perhaps unique in music history because of its deep emotional and historical connection to the people of Russia. Malcolm Hamrick Brown claims that, as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century, "a distinctive quality of 'Russianness' can be discerned" in music composed both by native Russians and by foreigners living in Russia.[1] He goes on to explain that this Russian quality he is describing is based upon the two dominant types of vocal music in Russia at that time -- choral music of the church and folk music. These then are the bases for all music that can be called Russian.

In discussing Russian culture, Suzanne Massie claims that "the Russians are a profoundly musical people who from their earliest days have marked the whole course of their lives and history by singing."[2] At first, this may seem an oversimplification but she follows her statement with quotations from many visitors to Russia during the nineteenth century who commented on the amount of music experienced in the country and the deep involvement of music in all aspects of Russian life. Here is the beginning of an understanding of a difference in the people of Russia and persons from other countries.

Simply the size of the country of Russia and the many peoples that inhabit the

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[1]Malcolm Hamrick Brown, "Native Song and National Consciousness," *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Theofanis George Stavros (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 62.

[2]Suzanne Massie, *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 180.

country led to situations and difficulties unique from the other countries of Europe. Religion was one of the elements used to unify this huge area and music was very important to religion. Folk music was emphasized in the country, whereas in court life most music was Italian or French. Early attempts at Russian opera demonstrate this blend by incorporating folk music into works that are basically Italian or French sounding operas.

In discussing the importance of Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar* (1836), Prince Vladimir Odoevsky said that:

> ... The question about the importance for art in general and for Russian art in particular of a *Russian* opera, a *Russian* music, indeed, of a national [*narodnaia*] music in general, has been answered in this opera...The composer has plumbed deeply the character of Russian melody. ...[this] inaugurates in art history a new era: *the era of Russian music.*[3]

Here one of the great contributions of Glinka was the inclusion of the chorus of Russian citizens, not new to opera altogether, but here beginning to gain a new importance that culminates with Musorgsky.

By the time of Musorgsky the people have moved forward to take center stage, both literally and figuratively. Vladimir Morosan states that in "both *Boris Godunov* and *Khovanshchina* the collective historical fate of the Russian people was of greater importance than the fate of any individual in the drama."[4]

Caryl Emerson writes that "these techniques -- in which the type of choral setting chosen reflects the degree of cohesion, ideological commitment, or historical effectiveness of the people - must count as one of Musorgsky's great contributions to

[3]Quoted and translated by Brown in "Native Song and National Consciousness," 79.

[4]Vladimir Morosan, "Musorgsky's Choral Style," *Musorgsky: In Memoriam 1881-1981,* ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1982), 97.

musical dramaturgy."[5] James Billington goes a step further in claiming that "the serious music drama was a way of conducting that 'conversation with the people' which was Musorgsky's conception of art."[6] The connection between Musorgsky and the people was important to his works and his conception of Russian opera.

During the nineteenth-century a new group of activists appeared in Russia. Known as the Populists this group supported a new way of life, based on communal living and support of the common goals of each community. This group was composed mostly of students who were in favor of educating the masses and changing the government, either peaceably or through force. Many members of the artistic community, including Musorgsky, were members of the Populists and worked for changes in Russian life.[7]

The emphasis on the people of Russia occurred almost simultaneously in all the arts of nineteenth-century Russia. The group of artists popular at this time were called the "wanderers" (the *peredvizhniki),* with their most famous member Ilya Repin (1844-1930). These artists were known for art that dramatically showed the Russian people in all their facets. Most were pictures of beaten, downtrodden people, or depicted defiant youths attempting to better themselves in this difficult life. The wanderers first gained fame in 1863 by refusing to submit paintings meeting the qualifications for an Academy of Fine Arts painting contest. They claimed that they were compelled to depict life as it really was in Russia instead of the theme requested. Examples of the type of paintings created by the wanderers can be seen in Repin's "Haulers on the Volga" (1870 - 73) and

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[5]Caryl Emerson and Robert William Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 194.

[6]James H. Billington, *The Icon and The Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970*),* 408.

[7] Information on the Populists and their beliefs is given in Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, trans. by Francis Haskell (New York: Knopf, 1960) and Ralph Matlaw, ed., *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

Basil Surikov's *The Boyarynya Morozova* (1887).

"Haulers on the Volga" depicts a number of peasant men pulling a boat over a low water area. Massie states that Repin actually lived among these boat haulers for an entire summer while preparing for this portrait and that he "later wrote about each man, vividly describing his specific memorable qualities."[8] Most of the men are elderly, weathered by time and by their harsh lives. Their faces are looking toward the ground as if defeated. In the midst of this, one young boy is shown with his face defiantly looking toward the sky and his chin thrust forward. This one character symbolizes the determination and strength of the new generation that will not be beaten down. While Repin painted many scenes of polite society and ordinary household events, this one painting of peasant workers stands out because of its continued popularity among Russian citizens.

The painting by Surikov is doubly important to this discussion, for it depicts also a Holy Fool as one of the crowd watching the disgraced lady being carried out of the Kremlin on her way to prison. This painting is based on a historical event of the seventeenth century similar to the sixteenth-century religious reformation in Western Europe. The depicted lady is one of a group of persons, called the Old Believers, who resisted the reforms made by the Russian Orthodox Church and the Fool appears to be signaling to the lady with a sign of the Old Believers.[9] A work of art from the second half of the nineteenth century that is based on a historical event again uses the common people of Russia as a major element and includes the character of the Fool. There is also possibly some political meaning intimated by this painting, an idea that coincides with the meaning Musorgsky adds to *Boris Godunov*. Yu Korolyov, writing in the introduction to the Tretyakov Gallery book describes Surikov as possessing:

[8]Massie, 332.

[9] This painting and its portrayal of the fool is discussed by Billington, 168-169.

> A rare gift of historical clairvoyance - he interpreted Russian history as a sequence of historical events in which the Russian people played a major role. Surikov succeeded in imparting to his monumental canvases, akin to Musorgsky's musical narration's, the emotional charge of people's dramas and tragedies combined with a historical perspective.[10]

In art, then, we see the character of the Fool, as one of the people and as an important figure in Russian history as well as popular storytelling.

The people of Russia are again stressed in the literature of nineteenth-century Russia. Donald Fanger discusses the emergence of Russian literature during this time and defines three common elements of their work: "the dignity of the novel," the "*formal eccentricity* of the Russian novel," and "the shared sense of a striking historical continuity."[11] These can be seen, he suggests, in the work of Pushkin, Count Lev Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Ivan Turgenev, and others. Some contributions of Pushkin have been previously discussed, but here mention should be made of the important contributions of other Russian writers.

Ivan Turgenev was born in 1818 in the countryside outside of Moscow, received his early schooling in Moscow, and went to the University of Berlin. This varied upbringing made him uniquely aware of the many differences between the peasant life of Russia, the Russian nobility, and the persons of Western Europe. It is perhaps his greatest gift that he was able to see the good and the bad in each of these groups. In *Fathers and Sons* (1862) this ability is spotlighted in Turgenev's depiction of Bazarov as representing the young, critical generation coming of age around the time of the emancipation of the serfs. Also depicted are characters showing the nobility and the

[10]Yu Korolyov, foreword to *The Tretyakov Gallery* (Moscow: Izobrazitelnoye Isskusstvo Publishers, 1990), 11.

[11]Donald Fanger, "On the Russianness of the Russian Nineteenth-Century Novel," *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Theofanis George Brown (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 46.

peasants, all reacting to the changes brought about by this large breakup in societal standings. For example, the characters of Bazarov's parents depict the typical peasants, bewildered by all the changes happening around them, but still strongly supportive of their country. Most of these characters are clearly meant to be composites, each representing a segment of society. This novel is still popular in Russia and it is a credit to Turgenev that the people of Russia react as strongly as they do to this story, for obviously it touches a number of emotions in its readers. Raymond Canon, writing in his introduction to an English edition of *Fathers and Sons* says:

> Turgenev as a novelist was above all a realist. He did not wish to depict life as idyllic or show it in all its sordidness and injustice, but to portray it as it really was, with all its inherent good and evil, its beauty and ugliness.[12]

Realism was an important part of the philosophy of this generation. The twin definitions of realism and populism, and the splinter concept of nihilism, can here be interpreted to show both the artistic meaning and a connection with the politics of the day.

Aside from Pushkin, Tolstoy is probably the best known today of the Russian writers from this nineteenth-century period. Simply the mention of *War and Peace* or *Anna Karenina*, calls to mind epic portrayals of Russian conflicts, Russian themes, and Russian characters. Tolstoy was born in 1828 on the estate called Yasnaya Polyana, in the countryside outside of Moscow, and it was this land that he discussed so lovingly in his books. His first great novel, *War and Peace,* was published in 1869 and told the story of two Russian families during the Napoleonic war. Published in the same year as Musorgsky finished his first version of *Boris Godunov* and also retelling a historical event from Russian history, *War and Peace* is also closely connected to the people of Russia and their identity as a character in the overall story. The publication of this work received

[12]Raymond R Canon, foreword to *Fathers and Sons*, by Ivan Turgenev (Clinton, Mass.: Airmont Publishing Company, 1967), 7

much criticism, but at the same time was a huge success. The success it had, and has held to the present day, may be a result of Tolstoy's ability to portray ordinary people reacting to extraordinary situations and events. Clearly the people are the story in his writing.

Fyodor Dostoevsky was born in Moscow in 1821, making him the first of the writers here discussed who was born in the city rather than in the country. This may be seen as significant in discussing the importance of psychology in the characters of his novels. While the people are still present and are a character, the major characters are much more involved with questioning themselves and their surroundings, rather than humbly accepting life as it is presented to them. He was seven years older than Tolstoy, and three years younger than Turgenev. Early in their careers the three authors knew of each other and sometimes exchanged manuscripts for comments. Dostoevsky was quickly separated from the group when, in 1848, he was sent to jail because of his involvement in a radical political group called the Petrashevtsy. After serving four years in prison in Siberia he eventually moved back to St. Petersburg and there wrote his great novels, including *Notes from the Underground*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. This last novel, in particular, is filled with the psychological ideas that were to fill Europe at the turn of the twentieth century. Dostoevsky was separated from the other authors through his deep religious fervor and political beliefs, but his goal in writing remained the same: "he felt the values of the simple Russian people -- meekness, compassion and acceptance of the will of God -- were what society should emulate."[13] Dostoevsky included the Russian people as examples of these moral goals for the country.

Another Russian writer from this time period is Nicolay Chernyshevsky (1828 – 1889), famous more for the intent of his writings than for any artistic value within his works. Chernyshevsky's best known work, titled *What is to be Done?*, served as a model

[13]Massie, 320.

to members of the Populist movement. Although written as a novel, the work discussed the history of social problems and gave Chernyshevsky's ideas for reform. This reform was to be based on the development of group communes and education of the masses, both of which Chernyshevsky suggested would only happen through revolution. Chernyshevsky was sent to prison because of his extremist ideas and, possibly because of this exile, became even more of a hero to his believers.[14]

Literature, then, is another category where, during the nineteenth century the people of Russia became a central character in all-important milestones. Whether writing stories about historical events from the past, depicting life in Russia in the present day, or speculating on future events, all of these writers recognized the people of Russia, the will of the people, as a powerful force on their country. In discussing specifically Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Massie says that "they were joined in their belief that in the Russian people lay the virtues that could illuminate the world."[15] Fanger says that "they were intensely aware of participating in a common cultural enterprise; that is, they had designs on their readers (and on themselves) in the name of a Russian cultural identity whose crystallization was still in process."[16]

An obvious question, which does not have an equally obvious answer, is: what brought all of these forces to reign in Russian culture at virtually the exact same moment? It would be difficult to show whether painting first influenced literature, or music first influenced art. What appears is a picture of a culture whose very basis had been torn apart and who was struggling to redefine itself and others around it. Because this idea of

[14] Information on Chernyshevsky based on accounts given in *Belinsky, Chernyshevsky, and Dobrolyubov*, ed. By Ralph Matlaw (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976) and Franco Venturi, *Roots of Revolution*, trans. By Francis Haskell (New York: Knopf, 1960).

[15] Massie, 320.

[16] Fanger, 52.

the Russian people is so central to each of their works it seems that the importance of this character should not be overlooked, and that, especially as it relates to music, should be given even stronger consideration. This brings us back again to *Boris Godunov* and the character of the Fool in the final act.

> The final act of *Boris Godunov* is one of the great problems in operatic literature. With the order of its two scenes frequently inverted, with the Kromy scene of "popular rebellion" often staged aimlessly (ignoring its harrowingly abrupt alternations between carnival and violence), and with the holy-fool episode usually duplicated earlier in the opera through a conflation of Musorgsky's two versions, Act IV makes a strangely disjointed impression.[17]

In the 1869 version of *Boris Godunov,* the final act, here called Part IV, is divided. The first half is the scene outside of St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow and the second is the death scene of Boris. In the St. Basil's scene, the character of the Fool appears and is taunted by a group of boys who steal his money.

Text :

Fool: I found a silver kopek today
Boys: Nonsense. If you've got one let us see!
(Boys snatch the coin)
Fool: Ah! Ivanushka's new kopek has gone! Ah! Ah! Come and give it back to him!
(Females hail Boris. Ask for bread)
Fool: Boris! Hey Boris! Ivanushka's new kopek has gone!
Boris: What makes him cry thus?
Fool: The boys have stolen and run off with it. Command that they be murdered just as you murdered Dimitri, the young Tsarevich
Shuisky: Keep quiet you fool! Seize hold of him at once!
Boris: Don't touch him! You holy man, pray for me.
Fool: No. Boris, I can't. I must not pray for a Tsar Herod. It is not allowed by the Lord.[18]

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[17] Caryl Emerson and Robert Oldani, *Modest Musorgsky and Boris Godunov: Myths, Realities, Reconsiderations*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 219.

[18]Text taken from David Lloyd-Jones' score of *Boris Godunov: Polyglot*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 316 – 324.

To summarize this scene, Boris appears and asks why the Fool is crying. The Fool explains that he was robbed and asks the Tsar to kill the young boys as he (the Tsar) killed the young Tsarevich. Because he has insulted the Tsar, Boris' assistant Shuisky immediately calls for the death of the Fool, but Boris insists that the Fool be left alone and asks that the Fool pray for his soul. The Fool replies that he is forbidden to pray for one who has betrayed his people and the Tsar leaves. The scene ends with the Fool singing his lament for the people of Russia.

Up to this point, the opera has followed the text of Pushkin's play almost exactly, this is the only appearance of the Fool in the play. The character is a simple inclusion of an aspect of Russian life and is based on an event in the life of Boris Godunov. There is no deeper meaning imaginable for this Fool. He sings a playful song with his entrance, is teased and robbed by the boys, and then the Fool and Boris have their exchange. This playful song is slightly altered by Musorgsky to include a hint of prophecy, which is quickly introduced in the lament. Here then is when the character begins to take on importance, both to the audience and to the story. According to Taruskin "Musorgsky marks the division between Pushkin's nonsense song and his own fool's prophecy with a remarkable musical change."[19] The lament is added by Musorgsky in both versions of the opera.

The death of Boris immediately follows, concluding the opera; here the lament appears to foreshadow the death scene that follows it. Any deeper meaning is precluded

[19]Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 76.

by the context in which Boris dominates.

In the revised version of the opera, the scene outside St. Basil's Cathedral is omitted and Act IV opens with the death scene of Boris. Following this a new scene is added in the forest of Kromy, outside of Moscow. In this added scene the false Dmitri, pretender to the throne of Russia, reappears and is hailed by the crowd as their savior and new tsar. The story by Pushkin has no reappearance of the pretender and here is added by Musorgsky to lend import to the new conclusion, to draw attention away from the character of Boris and to demonstrate the beginnings of a new time of troubles for the people of Russia. The audience would remember that this pretender (the false Dmitri) was made tsar and, following his death, was replaced by another pretender and more troubles all before the final acceptance of Michael Romanov in 1613. The new scene retains two segments from the 1869 version St. Basil's scene, both concerning the character of the Fool.

First the entry of the Fool is retained with the teasing and stealing of his money. This is cut short however, as the Tsar no longer appears and has, in fact, died in the previous scene. The Fool no longer has any contact with the Tsar and no mention is made of the murder of the young Tsarevich. Billington cautions against the "dramatic and critical overemphasis on the role of Boris, which has become conventional since Chaliapin."[20]

[20]Billington, 409. Chaliapin was the most famous of the singers to perform the role of Boris and it is here suggested that the character of Boris gained importance in the reception history of the opera, not because of anything written or intended by Musorgsky but rather because of the huge popularity of this actor and the implied pressure for other actors to achieve his accomplishments with the role.

It seems rather that this material with the boys is only retained to introduce the character of the Fool and to place him on stage for the conclusion of the opera. Here we recognize the first important change in the character of the Fool and his role. Instead of functioning solely as fodder for a chorus scene and a conscience for Boris, here the Fool stands on his own as a character with a function and purpose of his own. This might not be fully realized, but for the new conclusion to the opera.

After the entry of the Pretender, the "Glory" chorus of the people leads all other characters off stage, save the simpleton. Here the second segment of material from the initial version of the opera is reinserted along with some additions. The Fool again sings his lament, but now with a new text. Now the lament is for the country of Russia and the troubles that are to come, instead of simply prognosticating the death of Boris. Again, here there is no equivalent scene in Pushkin. This is pure Musorgsky. The Fool, who is the only character to see the reality of the situation, now has the last say of the opera and the dramatic conclusion with the death of Boris is supplanted by a much starker, simpler, and more telling ending. The lament is "explicitly and chillingly clairvoyant with respect to the outcome of the historical drama."[21] The import of this ending is conveyed by the words of the Fool: "weep O soul, soul of poor Russia / Soon the foe will come and the darkness nears."[22]

The site of this final scene is outside the city of Kromy, which was the scene of a victorious battle for Boris in the winter of 1604-1605, so the inclusion of this site at the

[21]Taruskin, 76.

conclusion of the opera is one example of Musorgsky mixing fact with fiction. In the opera, Boris is already dead before the scene at Kromy, while in reality; the order of the events was the opposite. Most educated Russians of the late nineteenth century would have recognized this alteration in events. The change in order of events in the final act places the death of Boris as an interior scene of the opera, rather than the concluding one, in much the same way as the play of Pushkin. Emerson states that "the revised version of the opera is no longer a personal but a national tragedy."[23]

There can be no overstating the importance of this change. Whether Musorgsky was fully conscious of the different interpretations of this version, the entire view of the story changes with this one scene change. The people truly become the focus of the work, as has been hinted at with the inclusion of folk songs and more chorus scenes in the second version. Morosan says that here "for the first time in the history of opera the common people, the *narod*, were cast as a collective protagonist, requiring (and receiving) of the composer an unprecedented variety and depth in musical characterization."[24] The character of the fool, who has been the only person to view the entire story with clear vision, now is the only character to understand the truth: the people have again fallen for an impostor to the throne and trouble will surely follow.

Robert Oldani has done extensive research on the music of this new final act and has made a strong argument for this scene's inclusion and importance. In so doing, he

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[22] Text here taken from the Paul Lamm edition with English translation by David Lloyd-Jones, 417.

[23]Emerson and Oldani, 220.

[24]Morosan, 97.

discusses this scene's key structure, keys associated with specific characters, and the final, inconclusive cadence of the opera. Oldani says that "the closing page is a masterstroke of inconclusiveness...both the overall harmonic motion in this scene and the local events of the closing page confirm in the music's structure the drama's open-ended conclusion.[25]"

The text of the Fool at his first entrance is only slightly changed from the play of Pushkin to the opera of Musorgsky but these changes are important to the vision of the composer. As the opera was originally intended as an *opera dialogue,* Musorgsky's goal was to depict the speech of the Russian language as closely as possible. Here a difficulty arose with using the text of Pushkin. The play was poetry, easily read aloud and set to music; and this conflicted with Musorgsky's ideas concerning Russian text. The regular meter of Pushkin's text, along with its use of poetic balance, set it apart from the concept of *dialogue* Musorgsky had in mind. In discussing the importance of text in the works of Musorgsky it is stated that:

> There is no other Russian composer for whom the verbal content of his works had so much significance as it did for Musorgsky. For him, the genesis of the text was as much an act of creation as was the composition of the music itself. This particular trait, so characteristic of the composer, requires attention by those who undertake to study his work. They must continually keep in sight the verbal as well as the musical structure of his operas.[26]

Musorgsky "surmised that the meaning of a word, and thus its potential musical

[25]Emerson and Oldani, 273-75.

[26]Alexandra Orlova and Maria Schneerson, "After Pushkin and Karamzin: Researching the Sources for the Libretto of *Boris Godunov*," in *Musorgsky, In Memoriam 1881-1981*. ed. Malcolm Hamrick Brown, trans. Veronique Zaytzeff (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms Press, 1982), 249.

exposition, could not be found in dictionaries or etymologies, but only in concrete unrepeatable utterances."[27] Therefore, at places when Musorgsky chose to write his own text, the new text often included muted final syllables and guttural accents in an attempt to imitate spoken Russian. Billington says that Musorgsky "sought to derive all his music from the hidden sounds and cadences of human speech ... to reproduce in music the themes and hypnotic repetitions of Russian oral folklore, the babble in the marketplace at Nizhny Novgorod, and the mysterious murmurs of nature itself."[28] This can first be seen in the playful song of the idiot at the beginning of the scene, shown as Example 1, and the text of which is given below.[29]

Pushkin Text	Musorgsky Text
The moon sails on,	Moonlight's shining and
The kitten cries,	kitten's whining;
Get up, Nick, arise,	Ivanushka arise,
Pray to God.	Pray to God Almighty.
	Pray to Christ in heaven,
	Christ our Saviour,
	send us sunlight, send us moonlight,
	send us sunlight…. moonlight…

Musorgsky clearly follows the text of Pushkin for the first four lines of his song with very little change. Following this point, the text has been added by Musorgsky and the musical setting changes dramatically. The song of the Fool starts rather simply in A minor and uses an ostinato from E to F, emphasizing the dominant note of E in the key of A minor. When the Fool sings, his vocal line is simple, harmonic, built around the tonic

[27]Emerson and Oldani, 186.

[28]Billington, 407.

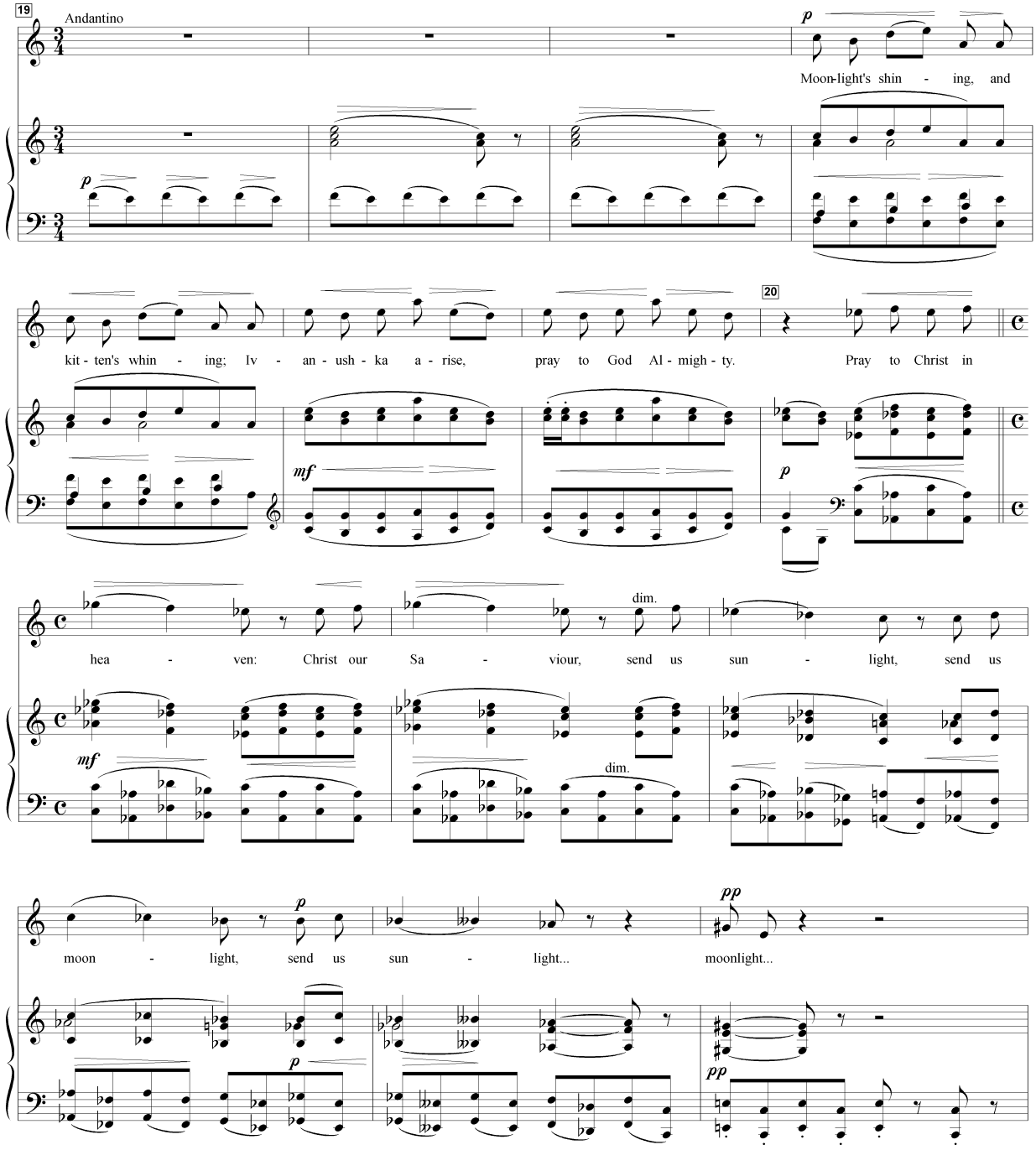
[29]Text here taken from Pushkin, 89 and the Paul Lamm edition of Boris Godunov , 315. Nick was also translated by Taruskin as "fool", 89.

chord of A minor. The opening is in 3/4 meter, which provides almost a dance character, and adds a feeling of lightness and poetry to the opening text. When the text moves to the text of Musorgsky there are many immediate changes. First, the text brings in an element of the future by discussing the weather of the future instead of the present. Second, the meter changes to 4/4 at this point; and third, the key has changed from a simple A minor to A flat major. The ostinato pattern changes to the notes of C and Eb, and then moves downward in a stepwise pattern, ending with an E-C ostinato. All of this functions to provide a sense of uncertainty and a loss of balance which is further emphasized by a subtle shift in cadences from strong to weak beats as can be seen in the final three measures where the short phrases end on beat two, then beat three, and finally on the second half of beat one. The ostinato continues just until the end of the measure and us broken up by the entrance of the street urchins teasing the Fool, but this ostinato will appear again with the final lament of the Fool.

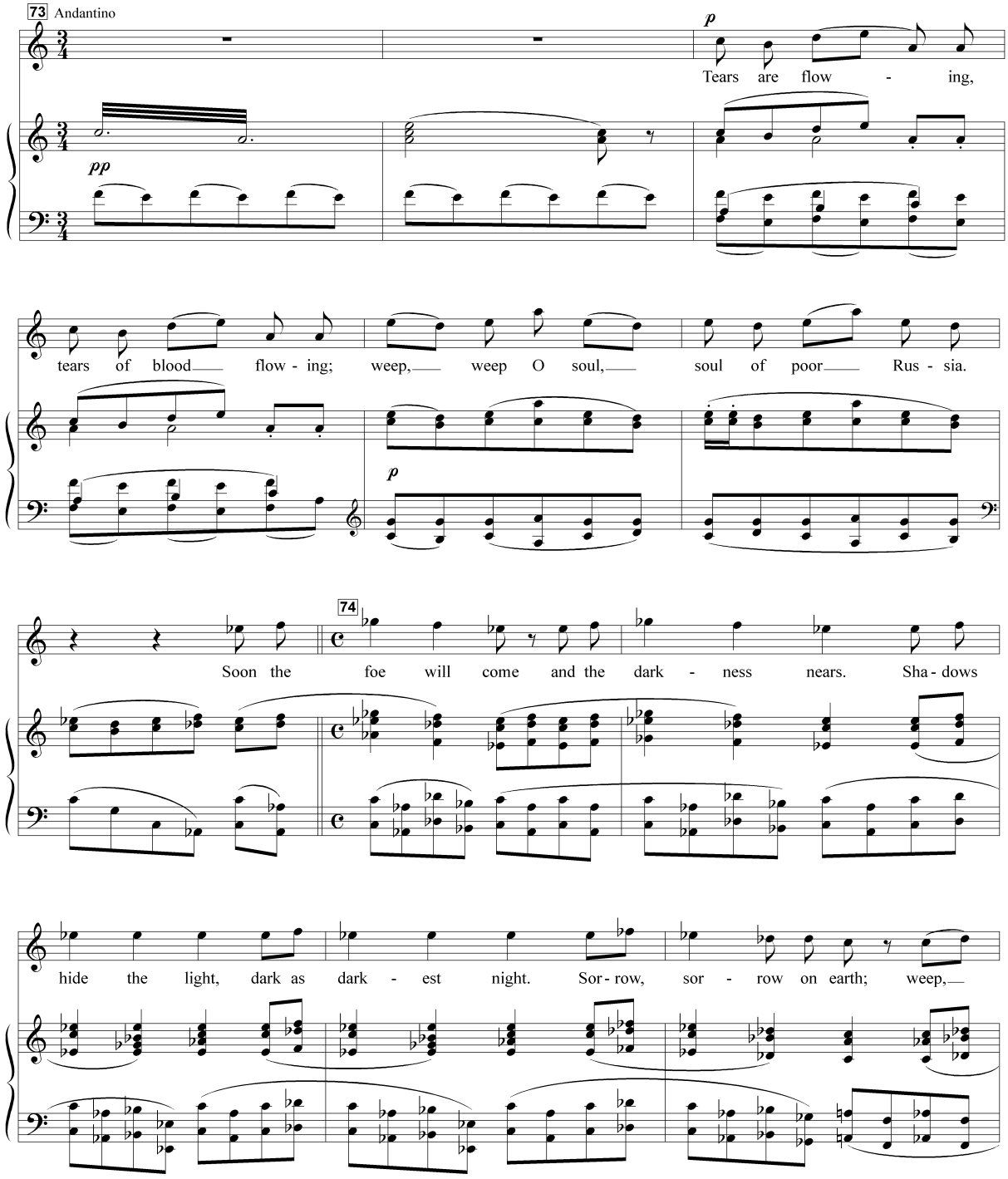
The final statement of the Fool begins almost exactly as the earlier verse, with only a slightly shortened introduction. As the basic tune has already been performed, this shortening can be easily explained because the audience would recognize both the character and the melody. Again the opening is in A minor and the tempo is 3/4. The text here, as shown below, has all been written by Musorgsky, not Pushkin, and it is here that the hint of prophesy suggested in the use of the future context in his earlier song is expanded to include all of the future of Russia and the Russian people.[30]

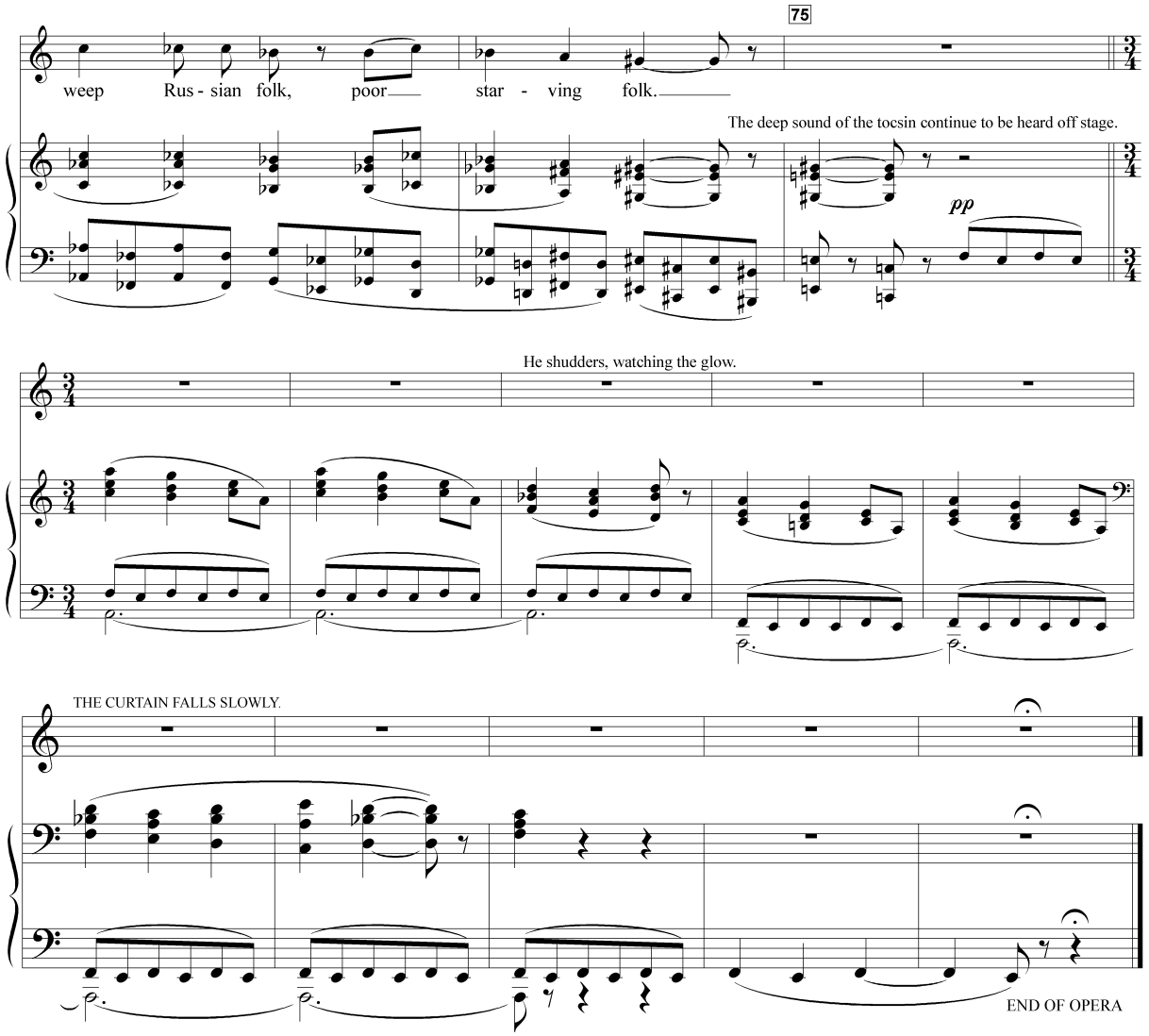
[30] Text here is again taken from the Paul Lamm edition of *Boris Godunov*, 417-718.

Example 1: *Boris Godunov*, Act IV, Scene I, nos. 19-20



Example 2: *Boris Godunov*, Act IV, nos. 73-75




75
weep Rus - sian folk, poor star - ving folk.
The deep sound of the tocsin continue to be heard off stage.
pp
He shudders, watching the glow.
THE CURTAIN FALLS SLOWLY.
END OF OPERA

Text
Tears are flowing, tears of blood flowing;
weep, weep O soul, soul of poor Russia.
Soon the foe will come and the darkness nears.
Shadows hide the light, dark as darkest night.
Sorrow, sorrow on earth;
weep, weep Russian folk, poor starving folk.

Musically, the beginning of this lament is a virtual repeat of the earlier song. Again the opening tempo changes to 4/4 at the eighth measure and the key moves again from A minor to A flat major. The ostinato is repeated and uses the same pattern as before through most of the song. The text is set to almost the exact same notes, with slight modifications made to fit the words of this lament as can be seen by comparing measure eight from example 1 with measure eight in the second song. The differences come at the conclusion with the final text of "poor starving folk" set comparably with "send us sunlight" but using enharmonic spellings. At this point in the first song there was the additional text of the single word "moonlight;" here there is no final text. The ostinato pattern continues with simple accompaniment for another eight measures and finally concludes with three measures of only ostinato. Through the accompanied measures of ostinato there is sounding a low A throughout, this being the tonic key of the piece. During the final three measures, this tonic note drops out and leaves only the alteration between the fifth and sixth scale degree of the key, with the last note being E, the dominant. This quiet, noncadential conclusion is the ending not only for this song, but also for the entire opera. That which opened with huge fanfare and the coronation of a king has ended with a single character and, finally, a single note. There is no resolution, just as there was to be no resolution for the Russian people, who were again following an impostor; the words of prophecy would immediately begin to come true.

This then, is the real focus of the opera. The story is not that of Boris Godunov, or of the pretender Dmitri: it is the story of the Russian people and it is seen through their representative, the Fool. By eliminating everyone else, either through the death of the character, or simply their removal from the stage, Musorgsky has shown his focus and his intent clearly. Oldani suggests this when he says that "with the addition of the Kromy scene, Musorgsky's own dramaturgy as well as his historical awareness had clearly evolved into a more complex unity."[31] Oldani does not mention however, the consequences of this "awareness" and what effect it has on the new conclusion of the opera.

To fully understand the relevance of this new ending, all of the previous discussion concerning life in nineteenth century Russia must be brought to the forefront and considered in light of the composer's beliefs and concerns. The people have moved to the center of the Russian stage in all possible ways. In the arts this has been easily shown to be true, but it is no less true in the political and social reform sweeping the country. *Boris Godunov* was written just a few years after the emancipation of the serfs, which freed millions of Russian citizens and allowed them to consider their lives and their futures to an extent beyond their wildest dreams. This optimistic view of emancipation did not last long but was in the forefront of many minds during the time Musorgsky was writing. The middle and upper classes of citizens had also seen great changes in their lives as a result of this action and were forced to reevaluate many ideas about society. The government was trying, ever so slowly, to react to all of these changes and to meet the demands of the many different cultures of people within their boundaries. All of these sweeping changes were in the minds of Musorgsky and his circle when this composition was evolving between 1869 and 1874.

[31]Emerson and Oldani, 195.

> Only when the opera is placed in the context of populism does the uniqueness and power of Musorgsky's version become fully apparent. For, just as his friend the populist historian Kostomarov insisted that the simple people rather than tsars were the proper subject of the true historian, so does Musorgsky make the Russian people rather than the figure of Boris the hero of his opera.[32]

The people of Russia function in *Boris Godunov* as a primary character, mainly through the Fool. The Fool is the personification of the people, freely voicing the thoughts and beliefs that others hold, but who are afraid of speaking aloud.

Finally, the views of Musorgsky concerning the people must be examined to try to see if the composer is attempting to represent the people of sixteenth-century Russia or nineteenth-century Russia. This is discussed in the next chapter.

Viewed in this way, the change in order of the final scenes takes on much more importance than a simple twist on the end of the opera. Musorgsky has changed the goal of the opera and the primary character. To again quote Taruskin: "in Kromy (and only in Kromy) one can speak accurately of the people as the real tragic hero of the opera (their tragic flaw being their credulity)."[33] This concept changes the idea of opera from that point forward and also changes the story of *Boris Godunov* from start to finish, not just the ending.

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[32]Billington, 409 - 410.

[33]Richard Taruskin, *Musorgsky: Eight Essays and an Epilogue* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 271.

CHAPTER V

MUSORGSKY AND THE FOOL

Musorgsky clearly was making a statement with the elements changed in the second version of his opera. Now we need to examine the meaning behind the changes and to place them into the time Musorgsky was writing. For this, more information about Musorgsky's life is necessary.

Modest Petrovich Musorgsky lived during a socially turbulent time in Russian history. During the reign of Nicholas I (1825-55) the government, ironically, resembled the rule of Boris Godunov, with Nicholas decreasing the use and importance of committees in favor of a more autocratic rule than his predecessor. Nicholas was very much a military ruler and great emphasis was put on strengthening the military might of the country to fortify against foreign invasion. One of the ways this was accomplished was through the establishment of various committees made up of Nicholas's closest advisors who studied and made recommendations concerning most matters of the government.[1] By use of these small groups Nicholas was able to rely only on his most trusted advisors and consolidate power among this trusted group. Following on the heels of an attempted revolution, Nicholas worked hard to control all possible elements who might work against his own ideals. In this way the government of Nicholas I worked to censor many individuals, groups, even the numbers of students allowed to attend university.

[1] The rule of Nicholas I and his successors is discussed in length by Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) 326 – 434.

The industrial revolution also affected Russian life during this time period, although its effect was not as strong as in other countries. There were developments made in farming, manufacturing, and transportation but these developments came, greatly, at the expense of the serfs and small land owners who worked harder while falling further and further behind financially. While some parts of Russian society were adapting to the same advances as the rest of Western Europe, other elements were resisting change; net effect was little growth in comparison with the large changes made in other countries.

With the death of Nicholas I in March of 1855, his son Alexander II took the throne. One of the most important acts of Alexander's rule was the emancipation of the serfs signed on March 3, 1861, ironically just a month before the start of the Civil War in the United States to resolve a similar issue. According to Nicholas Riasanovsky Alexander said "it would be better to abolish serfdom from above than to wait until it would begin to abolish itself from below".[2] The issue was now open for debate and committees were formed to study the issue and its repercussions on the country as a whole. By the 1840's many landowners were greatly in debt and could no longer afford to keep their serfs, but there was no other place for them to go. This, as well as other problems in the system, had led to many peasant uprisings and small rebellions. Popular thought, influenced by the writings of Turgenev among others, turned in favor of the abolishment of the practice. The emancipation allowed each serf to keep a small portion of the land he had been working, or money if the serf had not been involved with

[2] Ibid., 371.

farming. Also the government compensated the former owners for their loss. In reality neither of these aspects were sufficient, either for the serfs to support themselves, or for the gentry to recuperate from the losses. This legislation was a large step forward in human rights, but quickly disillusioned those most strongly affected by it.

Another accomplishment made by Alexander was the reform of local government and the start of the zemstvo. The zemstvo had been a part of Russian life, but without having the power to effect many changes. During the 1860's this entire system was revamped, giving citizens the power to vote for their leaders and instituting many rules for criminal and court cases.[3] While this, as the other reforms, was necessary and beneficial to most of the Russian people the reforms came and were accepted too slowly to change most attitudes. In discussing the reign of Alexander II, James Billington comments that "he had raised high hopes with his reforms in the early 1860s, but halted the program and reasserted strong autocratic controls in the later part of the decade", and that "Russia now faced a classic 'revolution of rising expectations'".[4] The results would lead to the revolutions in the start of the twentieth-century.

"Nihilism," as defined by Nicholas Riasanovsky means, "above all else a fundamental rebellion against accepted values and standards."[5] In the second half of the nineteenth-century the concept of nihilism, a splinter group from the Populists, applied to a large percentage of the population, especially the younger population. These radicals tried to change the country, some by peaceably educating the peasants, others by starting

[3] Ibid., 374-375.
[4] James Billington, *The Face of Russia: Anguish, Aspiration, and Achievement in Russian Culture* (New York: TV Books, 1998), 167.
[5] Nicholas Riasanovsky, 381.

revolutions.[6] In March of 1881 members of this radical group assassinated Alexander II and the short reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II were mostly reactions against these nihilists. While both of these rulers tried to effect some positive changes, they simultaneously were reacting to the rebellions by retracting earlier reforms and introducing restrictive legislation. Clearly, neither of these Tsars had successful rules.

During the first half of the century a flowering of the arts appeared in Russia with such masters as Pushkin, Turgenev, Glinka, and Dargomyzhsky. This is the same time period in which Karamzin was writing his *History of the Russian State* and *Memoir on Ancient and Modern Russia.*[7] This seemingly sudden appearance of many talented artists may partially be credited to a broad view of education that developed in the start of the nineteenth-century. Ideas about education and art that came from the west were more easily incorporated into Russian society than were concepts of government, and these ideas were most strongly connected to the people of the gentry. These members of the aristocracy often traveled the continent as part of their education and brought back with them many ideas, books, music, and art from other parts of Europe. Pushkin and the others were all members of elevated gentry with the time, money, and opportunity to study topics popular throughout Europe. However, the gentry would not be the only artists in Russia for long. Even within Russia education grew quickly in the first half of the nineteenth-century with more schools opening throughout the country and more sons being allowed to attend university.

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[6] James Billington, (161) gives some details of one group, called the Russian Musical Society, in which members of the gentry volunteered time to teach peasants one day a week.

[7] Refer to Chapter 2 of this document for more information on the writings of Nicholas Karamzin and their importance to the story of Boris Godunov.

By the next generation artists began to develop in all segments of Russian society. Musorgsky's father was a wealthy landowner but his grandmother had been a serf, so Modest had connections with both the gentry and the peasants. Musically he often said that his peasant connections led to his love of folk music and his emphasis on Russian music, but without the connections gained through his father he would never have been able to study music or have the time to pursue writing music. Billington states that Russian artists at this time "wanted to lose themselves in the people in order to help realize freedom for the people."[8] This aptly describes the goals Musorgsky clearly had for his music. Modest attended a military school before entering a career in the civil service that would be his primary source of income for the rest of his life. From May of 1867 until January 1869 Musorgsky did not work for the government but was a fulltime composer. This was one of the most prolific times in his life for composition, as evidenced by the many songs and the first act of *The Marriage* written during this period, and dovetails with the writing of the first version of *Boris Godunov*.

The other constant element in Musorgsky's life was an illness that manifested itself early in his adult life and plagued Modest for the rest of his life. In letters he discussed this as a nervous condition that affected him both physically and emotionally. Modern medicine would probably list his dysfunction as a schizophrenic condition, which was exaggerated by his use of alcohol.[9] Musorgsky died March 28, 1881, after suffering a series of these attacks. The well-known portrait of the composer by Repin

[8] Billington, 157.
[9] Gerald Abraham writes that Musorgsky suffered from a "nervous disorder" and that in times of trouble "tried to drown his sorrows by all-too-familiar means." *Masters of Russian Music* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1936), 182, 194.

was painted during this time and clearly shows the effects of prolonged alcohol poisoning on Musorgsky's body.

This was the turbulence in which Modest Musorgsky grew to adulthood. While his civil service job provided for him, it also constricted the time and effort he was able to devote to music. At the same time government restrictions also interfered with his writing of music. He was caught between generations.

Musorgsky sympathized with the Populists and wavered in his opinions on the government. Through his civil service job he had grown disenchanted with many aspects of life in Russia and he even briefly joined a commune to experience a different lifestyle, which he thought would be beneficial. The censorship the government imposed on the arts affected music of Musorgsky's career, as has been seen, and he favored the changes introduced by realism. As Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier says "the disposition to consider art… as primarily expressing extrinsic moral, civic, or national values… is a pronounced Russian trait."[10] Theoretically speaking, even Musorgsky's music fits the definition of realism with its importance on imitating the mounds of true human speech and Russian folk music instead of following traditional western standards.

The term "nihilism" was developed by Turgenev in his novel *Fathers and Sons* to describe his hero character Bazarov, and it also nicely fits Musorgsky. Bazarov was caught between two different worlds during a turbulent time and Musorgsky suffered the same ailment. While Musorgsky did not actively join in revolutionary activities it appears he left some messages in his music concerning his thoughts about the time in

which he lived. The changing of the ending of *Boris Godunov* is the best example of this. By foreshadowing to the audience an event outside the scope of the opera, he changed the meaning of the opera from a simple historical play to a message for all of people in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Billington says that this has "brilliant, even prophetic insight" into the future of Russia and that it "tells us a great deal about the answers being explored in the 1860s and 1870s for a new basis of authority in Russia."[11] The change is significant enough that no other interpretation makes sense. Modest was displaying his pessimism for all to see; realism at its most vivid. Here was Musorgsky's statement to the world about Russian government and Russian life, and perhaps even a gentle dig to those that blindly follow any new leader in hopes that the new is better than the old. While Modest was not shouting his disenchantment from the rooftops, as were many people, he found a way to make his feelings known.

Is this too large a leap? I think not. I believe the evidence clearly shows that Musorgsky was making statements throughout his music, some of which have previously been discussed. For instance, the use of the incorporated love interest of Rangoni and Marina as depicting a love not quite true is a clear case of Musorgsky using music to demonstrate his feelings. The use of the fool at the end of the opera is an obvious depiction for Musorgsky; one wonders if the audience at the first performances would have understood it. Possibly not, for understanding is here based on knowing the versions of the opera and its changes, as well as the perspective gained from being a

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[10] Elizabeth Kridl Valkenier, " The Intelligentsia and Art," in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia* ed. Theofanis George Stavrou (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1983), 153.
[11] Billington, 168.

hundred years removed from the premiere. However the ending of the second version is chilling and must have been so to that audience, even if they did not fully understand all the implications.

This brings back the quote of Taruskin comparing Musorgsky to the Yrodivy.[12] The similarities between the two seem prevalent enough that a link is not beyond the scope of imagination. Musorgsky lived much of his life on the outskirts of society. He was never prosperous in his job, opinions on his music ranged from genius to idiot, he was unsuccessful in love, and he never achieved the level of popular success he desired. The fool is another embodiment of a fringe person in society and the story of Musorgsky watching a Yrodivy at a country estate is well documented. As Stasov wrote "the character and the scene were strongly imprinted on his soul."[13] This event led directly to Musorgsky's composition of a song called "Darling Savishna" and obviously the event stayed with Modest. When given another opportunity to write a song for a fool Musorgsky took full advantage. The new ending of *Boris Godunov* was the perfect vehicle for Musorgsky to make a statement to his countrymen while remaining somewhat hidden behind his music. That the story and the character already existed in Pushkin possibly encouraged him, when considering his second version of the opera, to use this opportunity to display subtly his true emotions and feelings. Clearly Musorgsky was reflecting a popular sentiment of his time, and using his own brand of genius to do so. This change is subtle enough to slip by many audiences, and obviously many censors, but

[12] This quote is given in the Introduction, page 2-3.
[13] Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 71. Translation of Vladimir Vasilyevich Stasov, "Modest Petrovich Musorgsky" (1881), in Stasov, *Izbranniye sochineniya* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1952), vol.2, p. 184.

not slip past others who understood the sentiment. Nobody's fool fits well here to describe both Musorgsky and the character of the Yrodivy which, it seems, was Musorgsky's intent all along.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Opera is a special type of music specifically because of the extramusical connections possible. Here, in Modest Musorgsky's opera *Boris Godunov* these connections have been shown to relate to almost all elements of the completed work. The realities of life in Russia, both during the time of Boris Godunov himself and during the life of the composer Musorgsky, influenced how and why the story was retold. The importance of the people demonstrates a developing form of humanism fitting with the opera's conception in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Most importantly, the change in endings between the two versions of the work altered the entire meaning of the composition. This study suggests that this was meant as a political statement on the part of the composer.

By better understanding the writing of history in Russia from the time of Boris to the present, some insight has been gained into the way the history has developed and changed our retelling from a story about a ruler to an opera about a people. In studying the two versions of the Musorgsky opera the changes have been highlighted, allowing their importance to come to the forefront. And through the use of the people as chorus Musorgsky has made his story a human one, involving everyday persons and places into what had begun as a royal tale.

The character of the Yrodivy, or fool, stands out for his supreme importance to the second version of the opera. The character sings only a few lines and appears only at the conclusion of the work, but summarizes the intended meaning of the composer. I

believe the significance of this character has, until this time, not been fully understood. It is hoped that this study will lead to further discussion and new ideas concerning the entire opera. The fool in this opera is clearly not the Yrodivy, he is clearly anything but a fool; only those around him fail to recognize the truth and import of his words. Perhaps in this way, Musorgsky had the final laugh on all those who failed to grasp his message.

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